

Labor and Public Employees Committee Hearing
Tuesday, March 15th, 2022

**Testimony in Support of Raised Senate Bill No. 422, AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESSENTIAL
WORKERS COVID-19 ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Brian Bonds
Regional Director
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Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today in support of Raised Senate Bill No. 422, An Act Concerning the Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program. My name is Brian Bonds and I work in the Greater Meriden area and am a resident of Manchester, CT.

- Frontline workers, including those that support homeless shelters, have been critical in combating the spread of the COVID virus and helping to keep our CT communities healthy and safe. We are asking for legislative action to include homeless response workers in the Connecticut Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, these essential workers have stepped up to a new challenge, working on the frontlines of the emergency response to care for those most vulnerable to the virus. Whether coordinating testing and vaccines, providing shelter services, isolation, and quarantine space, or moving people into housing, the contributions of the frontline staff in the homeless response system have been vital and essential. We also know that frontline staff and those fulfilling essential roles throughout the pandemic are disproportionately people of color.
- The New Beginnings Emergency Homeless Shelters located at 43 St. Casimer Street in Meriden CT, operated by New Opportunities Inc. provides emergency shelter and wrap around services for homeless men, women and families. The New Beginnings staff continued to provide fact to face services while much of the state and country was working from home. Staff members were confronted by unprecedented challenges; such as extreme staffing shortages, acute mental health issues brought upon by the pandemic, Covid outbreaks amongst the shelter guests and staff members etc. All while fear and uncertainty were at an all-time high. The shelter never closed, instead continued to provide services to the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony, and for your hard work making important and life-saving decisions as we look to shape Connecticut's future beyond the pandemic.

Sincerely,

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